

Use of the Internet to Provide Follow-up Educational Information and Support to Cardiac Patients Following Rehabilitation

Background

Currently, there are former patients with heart disease that participate in a cardiac rehabilitation program consisting of supervised exercise and education/behavior modification designed to improve functional status and reduce risk of recurrence. However, some patients revert to prior behaviors, which put them at increased risk of further cardiac problems. In an attempt to minimize this recurrence and to facilitate a more effective means of medical service, Tripler Army Medical Center's Cardiology Service, with the support of Pacific Telehealth & Technology Hui, will develop an interactive website to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of information and resources between patients and health care providers. The research team's hypothesis is that the presentation of educational and motivational materials via the Internet can positively change health behaviors and cardiac risk factors in cardiac rehabilitation patients and thus, improve their quality of life.

The Cardiac Follow-up project website will provide readily available advice and information to patients, and it will have the added benefit of serving patients worldwide regardless of location with almost instantaneous contact and efficient two-way interaction. Ergo, this web-based approach is expected to be more cost effective, and could potentially minimize routine visits to medical facilities or the physicians' office.

Mission Statement

The Cardiac Follow-up project will develop an interactive website to collect and disseminate information and resources. The focus will be to validate the feasibility of using the Internet in providing follow-on health care services to cardiac patients.

Project Overview

A project website will be developed with publicly accessible and password protected sections, which will be used to exchange information between project subjects/participants and the project team. The website will offer a refresher/support program of information, counseling and resources to assist patients in controlling cardiac risk factors and possibly improving their health status and quality of life.

Project implementation will involve research subjects who have participated in at least 12 weeks of a cardiac rehabilitation program completing a series of questionnaires regarding their health status prior to the test period. The subjects will be asked to access the project website for 1 hour per week for 12 weeks to read posted information, submit questions, and access links to other websites providing information related to heart disease. At the conclusion of the Internet intervention, the questionnaires will again be administered and statistical comparisons will be made with the initial and final values of the 12-week study.

among the study groups (individuals with Internet access at home, those who utilize collateral Internet access and a control group without Internet access).

With the collected data, the project team will attempt to determine whether or not the presentation of educational materials via the Internet positively changed the health behaviors, functional status, cardiac risk factors, and quality of life in cardiac patients. The team will also attempt to determine whether Internet access at home or office resulted in more beneficial change in the aforementioned factors compared with no Internet access or collateral Internet access (e.g., friends, relatives, community resource, etc).

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Provide a communication/information exchange via the Internet.
- Deliver a web-based, information service to cardiac rehabilitation patients.

Objectives

- Determine whether the presentation of educational materials via the Internet can result in a positive change in health behaviors, functional status, cardiac risk factors, and quality of life in cardiac patients.
- Determine whether Internet access at home or office results in more beneficial change as compared to having collateral or no Internet access.

Organization

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